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> ~~is~~ a Plea for the Middle Classes Rev. W. Woodard.

DISTINCTIVE TENETS
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE
REV. W. GRESLEY, M.A.,
PREBENDARY OF LICHFIELD.

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DISTINCTIVE TENETS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

[I have thought that it would be useful to draw up, in as concise a form as possible, a statement of the points of difference between the Church of England and Romanism, on the one hand, and Dissent on the other. In so doing, I have taken those points in which the difference is broad and decided, and easily shewn by reference to the words of our Formularies. Other points which are either not so important, or not so clearly demonstrable in argument against gainsayers,—though the proof may be evident to those who hold them—I have passed over, wishing to limit the tract to as small dimensions as I was able.]

THE sad divisions of opinion about religious doctrine which disturb the peace of many parishes, cannot fail to cause great trouble and sorrow to good Churchmen. It is natural to ask, why do not people who have their Bibles and Prayer Books in their hands all “speak the same thing,” as St. Paul said that Christians should? Whence come these divisions and schisms amongst us? Another thing which must be a great grief to those who really love their Church, is to see what slight attachment many persons have for it. Some will leave it altogether, others will go to the Church and the Meeting-house, by turns—as if one were as good as the other: and it is said that people who emigrate from England to foreign lands are very liable to be drawn away from the Church of their fathers, and to join any sect that happens to be most convenient for them. What is the cause of all this unsettledness and disputation?

There can be no doubt that a great deal of it is attributable to the want of an intelligent knowledge of what the doctrines and tenets of the Church of England really are. If men knew what these really are, they would not dispute about them as they do, neither would

they so lightly desert their own Church and think that it made no great difference to what body of Christians they belong. A rational knowledge, and firm belief, of the doctrines of their own Church, would preserve Church people from falling into such irregular courses, and, as too many do, into the sin of schism.

I propose, therefore, in the following pages, to set down briefly what are the tenets by which the Church of England is distinguished from the Church of Rome on the one hand, and the Protestant Dissenters on the other, and in which she agrees with the Church as it was first founded by the Apostles; and this I shall do by referring to her own Articles and Formularies.

In opposition, then, to Romanists, English Churchmen believe that "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England."—Article xxxvii. "No foreign Prince, person, Prelate, State, or Potentate, hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, Ecclesiastical or civil, within this realm."—See the Oath taken in the Ordination Service.

We believe that the Queen, not the Pope, is "supreme" governor of the Church of England. She is not the supreme *head* of the Church—a title which might seem to trench on the respect due to the Divine Head—but simply governor, or ruler, in all causes as well Ecclesiastical as civil:—as it is written in Holy Scripture—"Submit yourselves to *every* ordinance of man . . . to the King as *supreme*."—(1 Peter ii. 13.)

We hold also that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." With regard to the Apocryphal books, we consider that "the Church doth read [them] for example of life and instruction of manners."—Article vi. The Romanists, on the other hand, in opposition to the Primitive Church, receive the Apocrypha as of equal authority with the Canonical books of the Old and New Testament. They also believe that traditions are to be held in the same religious esteem

and veneration* as Holy Scripture—a doctrine which has led to many errors and corruptions.

We hold that “the Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshipping and adoration, as well of images as of reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and founded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”—Article xxii.

Also that “there are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel—that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord;” and that “those five commonly called Sacraments,—that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God. The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them.”—Article xxv. There is no intention in the Article to speak against, or undervalue Confirmation, Absolution, Matrimony, or Holy Orders; but simply to state that they are not Sacraments of like nature with Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord. The last part of the Article refers to the Romish practice of carrying about the Bread which has been consecrated for the Lord’s Supper, through the streets to sick persons, and teaching people to fall down on their knees and worship it as it passes them.

We hold also, in opposition to the Romanists, that “Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine), in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.”—Article xxviii.

Also that “the Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay-people, for both the parts of the Lord’s Sacrament, by Christ’s ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.”—Article xxx.

* “*Pari Pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ.*” See decree of the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent.

Also that "the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."—Article xxxi.

"Also that "Voluntary works over and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety."—Article xiv.

Also that "Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage."—Article xxxii.

Also that "it is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people."

These are the principal points in which the Church of England differs from the Church of Rome, and they constitute, as will be clearly seen, a very great difference both of principle and practice.

We now turn to those tenets of the Church of England in which she differs from Protestant Dissenters. These also are neither few nor unimportant.

First, as regards the Holy Scripture, we agree with them as to the "Sufficiency of Holy Scripture for salvation."—Article vi.

But we disagree with them in the unscriptural dogma that "the Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants"—in the sense that all men are to go to the Bible, and take their religion from it according to their own judgment. This, we believe, must of necessity lead, as indeed it has led, to endless strife and schism. It is not merely ignorant, conceited, and obstinate persons who have made fearful mistakes in acting upon this maxim, but even well-meaning and learned men, who have refused to listen to what the Church teaches as the meaning of the Bible, and have fancied that they are able to teach themselves, have formed very different and *contradictory* opinions upon most important points. For instance, some of these self-taught persons have boldly stated that the Bible teaches that our Blessed Saviour

was only a man like themselves, and not God as well as Man; and that His Death upon the Cross had nothing to do with making atonement for our sins. Others have said that the Bible does not teach us that we ought to be baptized, nor that we must partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. These are only a few samples of the dreadful errors of those who say that they will interpret the Bible for themselves, without caring for or examining what the Church teaches them in the Creeds and Catechism, and other parts of the Prayer Book in opposition to such notions. We believe that *there can only be one true sense of Scripture*, as of any other book,—and this sense is that which is held by the Church. “The Church . . . is the witness and keeper of Holy Writ,” “and hath authority in controversies of faith.”—Article xx. What the Church has received and taught from the time of the Apostles, that we believe to be the true sense of Scripture. In particular, we believe that “the three Creeds—Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed—ought to be thoroughly received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warranty of Holy Scripture.”—Article viii.

Next, as regards the Christian Ministry.—As we differ from Rome by rejecting the authority of the Pope, so we differ from the Dissenters by reverencing the office of Bishop, Priests, and Deacons. We consider the Bishops to have received their authority from the Apostles, and through them from Christ our Lord; and we believe that they are the channels through which grace and authority have been transmitted to the other orders of the Ministry, and through them to the Church in all ages.

Let us see what the Church of England says on this subject. The Twenty-third Article says, “It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.” And to whom does the Church of England believe that this authority has been given, and in what manner? This we shall learn by consulting her own Book of Consecration:—“The

Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops, and ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth, and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, doth contain all things necessary for such consecration and ordering : neither hath it anything that of itself is superstitious and ungodly. And therefore, whosoever are consecrated or ordered according to the Rites of that Book, since the second year of the fore-named King Edward unto this time, or hereafter shall be consecrated, or ordered according to the same Rites ; we decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully ordered and consecrated.”—Article xxxvi.

Turning to the Book of Consecration here referred to, which forms a part of our Prayer Book, we read as follows :—

“ It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that, from the Apostles’ time, there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ’s Church—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons :—which offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same ; and also by public Prayer, with Imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereto by lawful Authority ; and, therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued and reverently used and esteemed in the Church of England, no man shall be accounted, or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination.”

Here we see it is declared that Episcopal Consecration or Ordination is necessary for the lawful performance, in our Church, of the office of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. And this, on the express ground that it was so in the time of the Apostles, and has been so ever since ; so that to separate on this account cannot but be an act of schism, which is strongly condemned in Holy Scripture.

The mode of Consecration is this : At the Consecration of Bishops three Bishops are to officiate, and, after prayers have been offered up, “ then the Archbishop (or some other Bishop appointed) and Bishops present shall lay their hands upon the head of the elected

Bishop, kneeling before them upon his knees, the Archbishop saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Bishop in the Church of God, *now committed to thee by the Imposition of our hands*, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And remember that thou stir up *the grace of God which is given thee by this Imposition of our hands*; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and soberness.'"

In like manner in the "Ordering of Priests:"—"The Bishop, with the Priests present, shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of Priesthood; the Receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the Bishop saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. *Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.* And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of His Holy Sacraments, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.'

"Then the Bishop shall deliver to every one of them, kneeling, the Bible into his hand, saying, '*Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to administer the Holy Sacraments* in the Congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereto.'"

The "Ordering of Deacons" is much the same in form, only that inferior powers are conferred. No authority is given to "remit or retain sins," nor to administer the Holy Communion, but only to assist the Priest in the administration. The Deacon may not consecrate the Bread and Wine, nor pronounce the blessing or absolution on the people.

In the foregoing extracts it will be observed that it is distinctly stated that the grace of God, and the right to exercise the office, whether of Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, *is given by the imposition of hands*. It is the Archbishop, assisted by other Bishops, that admits the Bishop-elect to government in the Church of Christ; it is the Bishop that conveys authority to the Priests and Deacons.

But, it may be asked, who gave the Archbishop or Bishops authority thus to ordain and consecrate others? We answer, they received authority to do so when they were themselves made

Bishops. When each Bishop is consecrated, one of the questions asked of him is, "Will you be faithful in ordaining, sending, or laying hands on others?" To which he answers, "I will be so, by the help of God." This authority to ordain, commission, and lay hands on others, is part of the office of Bishop, which he receives by imposition of the hands of other Bishops, as they received it from those before them; and so upwards ever since the time of the Apostles, who received their authority from Christ the Lord.

All this is the undoubted doctrine of the Church of England, according to the Book of Consecration, which we declare, in our Thirty-seventh Article, "doth contain in it all things necessary for such consecration and ordering; neither hath it anything that is of itself superstitious or ungodly." It is clear, therefore, that the Church of England believes that Bishops *have* the authority to ordain and commission others, otherwise their doing so, if they had no authority, would be "ungodly;" and that, by the imposition of their hands, they can give them the Holy Ghost and power to remit sins, otherwise their pretending to do so would be "superstitious;" and we believe that Priests so ordained do actually receive authority to preach, and to remit sins, and to administer the Holy Sacrament, and are endowed with the gift of the Holy Ghost, for those purposes; for if they be not really so endowed, the service would certainly be ungodly and superstitious, which we declare our belief that it is not.

But the Dissenters, we know, acknowledge no such transmitted authority or divine mission in Bishops, or in the other orders of the Ministry; and, therefore, in this respect, there is a wide difference of doctrine between them and us.

Another great difference of doctrine is, with regard to the Sacraments. The Dissenters generally* look on them as mere signs. We, on the contrary, believe that there is not only the "outward and visible sign," but also "an inward and spiritual grace given to us" in each Sacrament. These are the words of

* I say "generally," because the Presbyterians (see Assembly's Catechism, c. 28) grant that "by the right use" of Baptism "grace is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such as that grace belongeth unto, &c.," i. e., the elect and predestined according to their doctrine.

our Catechism:— “What meanest thou by this word Sacrament? I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace *given to us*, ordained by Christ himself *as a means whereby we receive the same*, and a pledge to assure us thereof.” Here we see that the Sacraments are not merely *signs* of grace, but *means* whereby that grace is given to us—“*effectual signs*”—signs that are as “instruments”—*i. e.* signs whereby God giveth us that which is signified. (Article xxv.)

Let us consider the two Sacraments separately. We believe in “one Baptism for the Remission of Sins,” (see Nicene Creed). The “outward sign” in Baptism is “water;” the “inward spiritual grace given to us” by God, through the outward application of the water, is “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; [in one word *Regeneration*]—for being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.”—*Church Catechism*.

In accordance with which every baptized child is taught that in Baptism he was made “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.”—*Church Catechism*.

This doctrine is most evidently set forth in the Baptismal service:—

“Dearly beloved brethren, [so it begins] forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, and that our Saviour Christ saith, ‘None can enter into the kingdom of God *except he be regenerate*, and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost,’ I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to this child that thing which by nature he cannot have, that he may be baptized with water, *and the Holy Ghost*, and received into Christ’s Holy Church and be made a lively member of the same.”

Then the Minister says, “Almighty and everlasting God, who by the Baptism of Thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ in the river Jordan, did *sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin*, we beseech Thee for Thine infinite mercies that Thou wilt mercifully look upon this child; wash him, and *sanctify him with the Holy Ghost*.” Again, “We call upon Thee for this infant that he, coming to Thy Holy Baptism, may receive remission of his sins by *spiritual regeneration*,” and “may enjoy the everlasting benediction

of Thy heavenly washing." Again, "give Thy Holy Spirit to this infant that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation." And again, just before the application of the water, "sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin, and grant that this child, now to be baptized therein, may *receive the fulness of Thy grace.*"

Then the child is baptized "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." After which, the Minister says to the people, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child *is regenerate* and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God *for these benefits*, and with one accord make our prayers unto Him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning."

Then shall the Priest say, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it *HATH pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into Thy Holy Church."

And, at the end of the service, this note is added: "It is certain, by God's Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved."

This is the Church's doctrine of *Baptismal Regeneration*, namely, that every child, duly baptized according to her formularies, is regenerated by God's Holy Spirit; and if it dies before it commits actual sin, is undoubtedly saved, which it could not be unless it were regenerated; for our Lord said to Nicodemus, "verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii., 5.)

In this doctrine the Church differs widely and essentially from the Dissenters, who consider Baptism to be a mere outward ordinance, without any spiritual grace attached to it; and believe that regeneration takes place at some uncertain period of after-life.

No less different from the Dissenters' doctrine is that of the Church, with regard to the other Sacrament. I will briefly set down the doctrine of the Church on this head, and add a very few observations. The doctrine is thus taught to our children in the Catechism.

"What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?"

“Bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

“What is the inward part, or thing signified?

“The Body and Blood of Christ, which are *verily and indeed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.”

In the Communion Service it is said, that “the benefit is great if with a true penitent heart and lively faith, we receive that holy Sacrament (for then we *spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood*: then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us).” And, again, in the prayer before the consecration of the bread and wine, we say, “Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.” And, again, after receiving the Communion—“Almighty and everlasting God we most heartily thank Thee, for that Thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with *the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” At the end of the Communion Service it is declared, that when it is directed “that the communicants shall receive the same kneeling no adoration is intended, or ought to be done either unto the sacramental bread or wine there bodily received, or unto any *corporal presence* of Christ’s natural flesh and blood. For the Sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore, may not be adored (for that were idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians); and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven and not here; it being against the truth of Christ’s natural body to be at one time in more places than one.”

The Twenty-eighth Article says, “The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love of God that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a Sacrament of our redemption by Christ’s death; insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, *the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ* The body

of Christ is *given, taken, and eaten* in the Supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner; and the means whereby the body of Christ is *received and eaten* in the Supper is Faith.”*

In all these passages there is evidence of great care and circumspection in speaking of this most awful mystery; and an obvious anxiety to guard the doctrine against error, either on the side of Romanism or Dissent. As before, in opposition to the Romanists, the error of Transubstantiation was condemned; so now, in opposition to Dissenters, an irreverent depreciation of the holy Communion is guarded against, and the notion combatted that the Sacrament is a mere sign of a thing absent.

The following points are distinctly laid down :—

First, that “the body and blood of Christ are *verily and indeed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.” “To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.”

The expressions “*verily and indeed*” plainly condemn the prevalent error that the body and blood of Christ are received only after a figurative or metaphorical, an unreal, imaginary manner: they are received “*verily and indeed.*” Again they are received after a “*heavenly and spiritual*” manner, which in fact is *most* truly to receive them “*verily and indeed:*” inasmuch as the spiritual world is the true abiding state of things, this outward material world changing and transitory. Again, there is no “*corporal presence of Christ’s natural flesh and blood.*” He is “*verily and indeed*” present in spirit, but not “*corporally.*”

On the whole, the doctrine of our Church is manifestly this, that the body and blood of Christ are taken and received, not figuratively only, as the Dissenters say, nor yet corporally, or by any transubstantiation (or change of the substance of bread and

* Here note that it is not said faith is the means whereby the body of Christ is *given*. “The unworthiness of Ministers does not hinder the effect of the Sacraments, which be effectual because of Christ’s institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.”—Article xxvi. The *giving* of the body of Christ, therefore, is a ministerial act, complete even apart from faith in the giver without prejudice to the receiver.

wine) as the Romanists affirm, but *after* "a heavenly and spiritual manner"—"*verily and indeed.*"*

Another doctrine in which the Church of England differs from the Dissenters, is that of Absolution.

When each Priest is ordained, the Bishop places his hands upon his head, and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. *Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven; and whose sins thou retainest they are retained.*"

Accordingly, it is directed in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick. "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession the Priest shall absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it (after this sort)—

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, *who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him*, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority committed to me, *I absolve thee from all thy sins*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Nor is it on his death-bed only that the sinner is encouraged to

* Archdeacon Sinclair in his "Questions Illustrative of the Catechism," seems to have departed from his usual prudence and circumspection by introducing certain new expressions of his own in explanation of this great mystery, which are neither authorized by Holy Scripture, nor by the Formularies of our Church. He says, at p. 50, "we cannot *literally* eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood;" and at p. 51, he condemns those who say that it is "*literally and actually*," the body and blood of Christ that we partake of. But the Church says that we do "*verily and indeed*" receive them. It is hard to see the distinction. Most persons if told that it was an error to say that we "*literally and actually*" receive them, would suppose that it was equally so to say we receive them "*verily and indeed.*" "*Literally and actually*" seem opposed to "*figuratively and metaphorically*," so that if we cannot receive the body and blood of Christ "*literally and actually*," we must do so in some figurative sense, which is as great an error as the other extreme. Archdeacon Sinclair says, moreover, that though we do not eat the body and blood of Christ literally, we receive as great benefit *as if Christ did literally give us his flesh to eat*. This is a very strange assertion. What benefit could it be to eat the flesh of Christ, in a material or sensual manner, or in any other sense than that in which we do "*verily and indeed*" eat, *i. e.*, "*after a heavenly and spiritual manner!*" It does not appear how we can do so *more* "*literally*," or, if we could, that any benefit could accrue. It is extremely dangerous to introduce new terms, into this most deeply mysterious subject. Far better to keep exactly to what is written.

seek for special absolution: for it is said in the Exhortation to communicants;—"Because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy and with a quiet conscience; therefore, if there be any of you who by this means [*i. e.* private self-examination and repentance] cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that, by the Ministry of God's Holy Word, *he may receive the benefit of absolution*, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." In this case, as before, it is implied that he who seeks Absolution is one who "truly repents, and believes" in God.

These, then, are the principal tenets of the Church of England with regard to which she differs from Dissenters.

I. First, as to the interpretation of Scripture:—while the Dissenters claim and exercise the right of interpreting the Bible, each for himself, the necessary consequence of which is a multitude of conflicting opinions and sects, the Church of England believes that there is only *one* true sense of Holy Scripture, that, namely, in which it has been received by the Apostolic Church from the beginning.

II. The Divine Institution of the Christian Ministry, and especially the order of Bishops; on whom we believe the Apostles themselves conferred the functions of governing the Church, and ordaining Ministers for all ages.

III. The doctrine of the Sacraments, especially Regeneration in Baptism, and that the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

IV. The power of the Church to absolve sinners.

Various other doctrines and practices might be named, especially the use of a Liturgy or *Common Prayer* by the Church—in opposition to the practice of the Dissenters, who, unlike all other Christians who have ever lived, have no united prayer, but listen to their Minister's prayers as they would to a sermon. The observance of stated Fasts and Festivals is another point in which

we of the Church of England differ from Dissenters. But I will not now enlarge on these and other differences of practice. Let what has been already said suffice.

It is of the utmost importance, in times like the present, when men are so much tossed about by various winds of doctrine, that good Churchmen should be competently informed, at least with regard to the practical and essential doctrines of the Church. The greatest confusion and perplexity arises from want of sound information, and common attention to these important subjects. Unstable persons, not sufficiently guarded against the peculiar errors of Romanism, have been beguiled away from their own spiritual mother, and persuaded to join the intrusive Church of Rome. Others being ill-informed as to the distinctive difference between the Church and Dissent, have been either deceived into becoming Dissenters, and so been guilty of the sin of schism, or else have caused great trouble and perplexity in the Church, of which it cannot be said they are truly members, by misrepresenting or denying her doctrines. And it is to be feared that not a few persons, perplexed by the discordant opinions which they hear around them, and, not sufficiently grounded in the sound doctrines of the Church, have come to think one religion as good as another, and have sunk into a state little short of infidelity.

In the foregoing pages are enumerated the principal of those tenets, in which the Church of England differs from Romanists and Dissenters. Of course there are many in which she agrees with one or the other, or with both; but this does not make the points of difference unimportant. We are warned in Holy Scripture, that it is both dangerous and sinful to add to, or diminish from, the truth written in God's Word. The Romanists appear to us to be guilty of one error, the Dissenters of the other. The Romanists add what is not commanded or revealed. The Dissenters diminish from what is written in respect to important matters both of discipline and doctrine, (Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32; Rev. xxii. 18—19). I have set forth the real tenets of the Church of England in such a

manner that they cannot be contradicted, namely, by adducing portions of her own formularies. Those who doubt, have but to take their Prayer-book, and see whether the passages which I have brought forward are correctly quoted, and if they find them so, they will be convinced that what I have said is true. If any persons, notwithstanding what is written in our formularies, still do not believe the doctrines, it is manifest that they are not sound members of the Church : for it is impossible for those persons to be sound members of the Church, who do not believe what is contained in the Church's own formularies. And not only are they at variance with their own Church, but they are also at variance with the Primitive and Apostolic Church, of which our own is a pure and legitimate branch. For, as regards those Doctrines of the Church of England which distinguish her from Romanists, or from Dissenters, it will be found that the Romanists, or the Dissenters (as the case may be) have, in those respects, departed from the Doctrine and practice of the Church founded by the Apostles. Those tenets of the Church of England in which she differs from either Romanists or Dissenters, are portions of that Faith which has been once for all delivered to the Saints, taught and preserved in God's Holy Word, and received in the Apostolic Church.

THE END.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

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